

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation News

*To facilitate, promote, and
educate the public on the way
of teaching and playing the piano taught at
the Talent Education Research Institute
in Matsumoto, Japan by
Dr. Haruko Kataoka*

Piano Basics Foundation News

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PRACTICE

(PART 1 OF 2)

By Haruko Kataoka

Newsletter, Special Issue No. 13

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Translated by Chisa Aoki and

Teri Paradero

Edited by Karen Hagberg

A student performs very well at a concert. After the concert, another student's mother asks her how long she practices every day. She replies, "Two hours." The mother turns to her own child and insists that she must practice two hours every day also. This sort of dialogue occurs after every concert between parents and children.

For some reason, the parents' concern about practice seems to focus on the length of practice. However, what kind of practice is not addressed. It is very important how one practices. There is good practice and bad practice. So you must choose what and how to practice.

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I find it strange that parents do not realize this. One or even two hours of bad practice can only result in getting worse. Furthermore, hours of bad practice can only result in developing bad habits that are thoroughly ingrained. Conversely, thirty minutes daily of good practice would result in the development of good habits that will, in turn, nurture the ability to play well. In other words, there will be improvement.

Please, everyone, it is not about how many hours children practice. Rather, focus on the quality of practice—whether it is good or bad. There is nothing more idiotic than senselessly working hard at accumulating lots of bad practice.

Also, please understand that children are natural, and they innately absorb all the good things from their teachers because they learn exclusively through their senses. During their lesson, they do a great job, but once they go home and practice they have no clue what to do. It is a characteristic peculiar to children to be blissfully naïve with no ambition whatsoever. In other words, they do not yet possess drive to improve. Therefore, if you are not attentive, and if you ignore them, they will surely play in the worst possible way.

The help of a parent is absolutely necessary during practice. Unlike children, adults possess rich knowledge, ambition, and desire. This makes it possible for adults to remember what was covered during a lesson and to be able to coach the child well later during daily practice. When a child and an adult (whether teacher or parent) cooperate together, good quality practice can be accomplished.

This brings me back to a time in my past when I was six years old. My mother was so strict that she made me practice daily, all three hundred sixty-five days a year. I did not miss a single day. I loved music but I hated practice.

At my lessons, places where I would make mistakes were certainly identified, but I have no recollection of ever being assigned how to practice a certain

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section to improve my pieces. So when my mother would order me to practice for two hours, I had no

choice but to play the piece from beginning to end, hands together. After the first time through, I would take a little break and then I would repeat hands together from beginning to end. If the break between these repetitions of the whole piece seemed too long to my mother, she would shout, “Haruko, what *are* you doing?!?” as I resentfully glared at the hands on a clock that moved more slowly than ever during my reluctant practice.

Even though I practiced daily in this bad way, I was able to memorize many pieces. I also must have been an enthusiastic child, because from the time I was very young people would rave about my playing and tell me how good I was, especially when the piece was exciting.

However, the results of this accumulated bad practice became apparent by the time I was about twenty. I became painfully aware that I did not have the basics, a foundation that I could count on to be able to play the piano well. The way I had practiced was not allowing me to advance from that point.

(Continued on page 3)

With all of the years of thinking that I was so good at piano, this realization came as a horrible shock to me. For adults to mindlessly compliment a child on something about which they have no knowledge is irresponsible. How shocking it is for a child to grow up and be disillusioned in this way. We must carefully think ahead into the future and be aware of the strong impact we have on our children as human beings.

Basic techniques, the 'what and how' of piano practice, must be taught to the student by the teacher from the very beginning. Otherwise, the absolute importance of good piano practice cannot be comprehended. This true not only with music

education, but of all types of disciplines and endeavors where the 'what and how' must be learned and mastered.

Good practice taught from the time students are very young as beginners and executed on a daily basis will benefit them immensely as human beings. The development and nurturing of the ability to do good practice will allow them to be able to advance successfully to ever higher levels, even if the amount of time available for practice diminishes as they get older.

(To be continued in next newsletter.)

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Japan Relief

The earthquake/tsunami disaster in Japan did not directly affect the area around the city of Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture where the Talent Education Institute is located, and consequently we can report that our teachers and friends are alright. However, the entire country remains in dire need of relief funds and help from the community worldwide.

The Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation Board has voted to donate \$3,000 from our general donations fund, and we encourage our members to contribute personally and to organize fundraising in our studios so that our students, many of whom have expressed concern about their friends and teachers in Japan, can feel they are helping. The following web site, http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/j/anzen/jishin_message.html, will refer you to various ways to donate recommended by the United States Embassy in Japan. You may also contribute directly to the Piano Basics Foundation (specify that the donation is to the relief fund), and it will be sent to a fund recommended by the teachers in Matsumoto through Japan Suzuki Method; or you may contribute directly to the Suzuki Method fund in Japan by transferring funds to the bank at this web site: www.suzukimethod.or.jp/indexE.html.

Please report your studio fundraising projects to Karen Hagberg kh@hagbergsuzuki.com for inclusion in upcoming newsletters. It is our hope that fundraising ideas will stimulate ongoing fundraising for a need that will continue, unfortunately, long into the future.

Greeting by Mrs. Keiko Ogiwara

Translation by Teri Paradero

***A speech delivered after the Friendship Concert
in Atlanta, Georgia on February 20, 2011***



From Left to right: Teri Paradero, Keiko Ogiwara, and Sarah Boiney at the Friendship Concert in Atlanta, Georgia on February 20, 2011. Photo by Pam Smith

I am pleased to see everyone here in Atlanta again.
It has been a while since my last time here.

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki developed, through music education, the method to nurture human beings. It takes a very long time to raise children. Please know that it will take 10 years for students to be able to use the techniques they are learning. The ability to use these basic techniques requires a strong conviction to continue to tell and ask children the same thing over and over again.

Education is different from business where profits are visible on a daily basis. You cannot achieve the result of education without continuous patience. Teachers and parents, even though you cannot see results immediately, please raise your children with patience and conviction. The effort they accumulate over time will become their wealth, one that they will never lose and will empower them for the rest of their lives.

Announcing DEEPLY DISCOUNTED Suzuki Piano Basics Starter Packs

For a limited time, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is pleased to offer its members Starter Packs for your students at a price even lower than our usual discounted price for materials. As usual, all materials are sent to Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation Members free of postage. We hope you can take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Starter Pack #1 \$50.00 CD's Kataoka recordings of Books 1-3
Books Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki
Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka

Starter Pack #2 \$25.00 Books Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki
Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka

Please use order form enclosed with this newsletter or contact Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, California 95831 g.nakagawa@comcast.net

Isolated: Forced to Research on My Own

By Renee Eckis

When I started researching Suzuki Piano Basics with Kataoka Sensei, I lived 100 miles from the closest Suzuki teacher. At the time, I thought that was most unfortunate. There was no one with whom I could get together for research on a regular basis; there was no nearby mentor as I struggled to understand Basics; there was no one but me to teach my young daughter if I wanted her to learn piano studying Basics and tone rather than just learning the notes.

We all can keep researching no matter what our circumstances.

Looking back now, I realize I was very fortunate. I was forced to learn to interpret my infrequent workshop lesson with Kataoka Sensei and to put it into practice myself. People always interpret what they hear differently depending on their own history, so another teacher might have taken away something totally different than what I heard. My geographic location made it necessary for me to observe Kataoka Sensei and to have a lesson with her as often as possible if I were to continue to develop. At that time, she was coming to the States in June and August, so I would get a lesson in June and practice diligently until she came back in August when I could check in again. Sometimes I was even fortunate enough to get a lesson in February. I watched my lesson videos and listened to the CDs between lessons.

As far as teaching my daughter, it would have been much easier to have a regular weekly teacher but we made it a priority for her to have annual lessons with Kataoka Sensei as well as other master teachers who had studied with

Kataoka. We did our best to follow through on the Basics they taught her. We both learned a lot.

As I continue studying with Kawamura Sensei and Ogiwara Sensei I am amazed by the chatter going on during master classes and question/answer sessions as teachers attempt to interpret what they are hearing for each other. Perhaps it is my introversion or just my independent spirit but I think we all need to learn to listen better for *ourselves*.

Dr Kataoka was a master at giving each student (or teacher) just what she felt they needed and could absorb. She allowed us to repeat the skill she was trying to develop until our bodies were able to show the ability not just until our minds could understand. Kawamura Sensei and Ogiwara Sensei are equally patient at letting us develop an ability with our body and not just the intellectual

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knowledge of a skill. There is a danger when we try to interpret and use words to explain a physical ability. Just as Karen Hagberg related in the last newsletter, we all need much repetition in order to really learn a new skill.

There are no shortcuts to Basics. I do think research groups are very valuable for feedback, mentoring, and encouragement but we also need to develop our own ears and judgment. We all learn at our own pace and in our own way. We all can keep researching no matter what our circumstances. What is most important is that we continue to research and develop for the children.

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

<http://core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/SuzukiPianoBasics>

How I Use “Starter Packs”

By Karen Hagberg

A few months ago, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation was able to begin offering Starter Packs of materials for beginners at a reduced price. When one of our members heard how I have been using these for my families, she suggested I write about it and ask for other teachers to write in to share how they have been using them.

I have to admit that I have not been doing a good job of getting the basic texts into the hands of my families: Nurtured by Love (Suzuki), How to Teach Beginners (Kataoka), and Sensibility and Education (Kataoka). When these three books were offered at \$25, I ordered several sets of them and asked families to buy them. Since getting these books into their hands, I have had a number of good questions and conversations with parents after they have begun reading the books. I can see already that their understanding, and most important their curiosity, about Suzuki Method has deepened.

In order to begin changing my ways by putting these materials into the hands of families even before lessons begin, I have begun charging a \$60 registration fee for beginning students. For this fee, families receive the three books mentioned above and the score and recording for Book 1. I keep an inventory of all these materials in my studio to make sure the parents really get them at the point of scheduling their first lesson. I have around 25 students presently in Book 1, and I often hear parents of these children engaging in conversation generated by their reading of the basic texts. I hate to admit

having been so lax about this important part of my job, but I figure I am never too old to improve my teaching.

Starter Packs (3 books for \$25; 3 books and Kataoka CD for Books 1-3 for \$50) are available to teachers who are members of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation. Family members are entitled to order the materials directly from the Foundation as well. Family memberships remain at \$25/year, and my next project is to require all my families to join the Foundation, particularly so that they have time to read, and reread, Dr. Kataoka's articles in the newsletter (not just to peruse them in the studio during lessons), and so that the parent who does not attend lessons may read them too. I also want them to be aware of upcoming workshops, institutes, and 10-Piano Concerts well in advance so that more of them can plan to participate.

Many years ago I began stocking adjustable seating in my studio for purchase by new students so I could be sure they had it before they began lessons. Before that, when I left it to families themselves to order this equipment, I would find out months (sometimes years!) later that they never got around to getting it. Still, when I teach in other studios, I run into students who do not have adjustable seating at home. As with the reading materials, if we teachers do not take the responsibility of getting important things into the hands of our students and their parents it probably won't happen.

It is never too late to become a better teacher.

Welcome, New Members!

The Abay Family
234 River Acres Dr.
Sacramento, CA 95831
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jade@rcos1.com

The Ching Family
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Where Is the Responsibility?

By Linda Nakagawa

It is hard to believe it has been 26 years since I first met Dr. Haruko Kataoka, co-founder of the Suzuki Piano Method and founder of Piano Basics Foundation. When she passed away my biggest regret was that my new students and parents would not have the opportunity to meet this very special person. Thank goodness the Japanese teachers who studied directly under her continue to come to the U.S. to help us to become better teachers for our students. I want to share some memories.

Do pianists know how to listen to their own tone?

I attended my first Kataoka workshop with a friend who was first a flutist. She knew how to listen to tone. We observed Dr. Kataoka demonstrating for a student and my friend said, "Wow, did you hear that? I've never heard the piano sound that good." I looked at her and thought to myself, "Hear what?" I could not tell the difference. I had no clue what she heard. I felt really stupid and then remembered what a viola teacher said about pianists: "Pianists can play the notes, but the piano cannot create a good tone." I knew I had to change my way of listening.

International Suzuki Conference in Edmonton, Canada: Dr. Kataoka was giving a lecture to teachers. She played part of the Clementi Sonatina, Op. 36 no. 3. She first demonstrated with a good sound then demonstrated with a poor sound. Everyone laughed but I did not laugh because the poor sound, unfortunately, was a very familiar sound to me. I knew I had to change my way of teaching.

Demonstration is the essence of Suzuki Method. I remember listening to Dr. Suzuki talk about tone. He demonstrated on the violin and his student also demonstrated. I had never heard the violin make such a beautiful sound. It was so obvious to me. I thought that the same must apply to the piano. I knew that I needed to listen to the piano tone with new ears. I decided that I needed to start practicing more. I tried very hard to work on my posture and understand "balance" at the piano. I made a promise to do at least one round of "down-ups" every single day until my next lesson with Dr. Kataoka. I have to admit it was a horrible promise to make. I hated myself for making it. It was such an easy thing to say. In reality it was such a difficult thing to do! I learned a lot about the importance of practicing. I complained to myself about my arm being tired and my back and shoulders hurting. There were times that I knew we would be leaving home early in the morning and not returning

until late at night. I had to decide when to do my practice. Many times I rushed through it just to get it over with. I learned a lot about how my students must feel when they have to practice. But, there were also times when I enjoyed it. I could tell something was changing in my ability. I started to hear a change in my sound. I started to feel a sense of ease in my body. I started to believe that I could hear better. I started to believe that I was going in the right direction to be able to demonstrate with a better sound for my students.

A long way to go: When our ears start to open, it is a wonderful invitation to the world of music, the world of sound. I heard Radu Lupu play a Schubert Impromptu. It was so gorgeous. The sound stayed in my head for months; I long to hear that sound again.

When our ears start to open, it is a wonderful invitation to the world of music, the world of sound.

I was preparing my student to have a lesson with Dr. Kataoka on the Paderewski Minuet. I was getting frustrated because I could hear the sound in my head that I

wanted the student to play. But I just could not get him to do it. Dr. Kataoka patiently listened to my student play the piece. She did not say a word. She just demonstrated the first page. My student listened. She asked him to play. Of course his sound improved ten-fold! I was shocked. I knew then that I must work harder to become a better teacher for my students.

Who gets to have the responsibility? I remember reading an article about a triangle of sorts in the Suzuki Method. The triangle consisted of equal parts, the teacher, the parent and the student. After many years of studying with Dr. Kataoka, I have had to disregard this idea. In her many lectures, Dr. Kataoka constantly said that the child had no responsibility. She often told me that everything is the teacher's responsibility. Of course, at the time it was not something I wanted to hear. But she said that the reason it is totally the teacher's responsibility is because the teacher knows everything, and that is a good thing. After many years of trying to learn how to teach the Suzuki Method, I agree with her. I take on that responsibility. I try my best with the families that make piano a priority in their lives. I try my best to work with families who are too busy to play the recordings and practice on a daily basis. I try my best to work with students who do not want to practice. In every situation, I know that if I handle it right, piano will enrich their lives in the future. That is my hope.

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

June 20-24, 2011

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville Suzuki Piano Basics Institute
Contact: Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921
boiney@suzukipiano.com
<http://louisville.edu/music/suzukipiano>

July 8-11, 2011

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Basics Festival with Bruce Anderson
Contact: Jacki Block 253-759-7213
jblock@ups.edu

July 25-29, 2011

Saint Louis, Missouri

Suzuki Piano Basics Institute with
Joan Krzywicki and Libby Armour
Contact: Patty Eversole 314-837-1881
<http://stlsuzukipiano.tripod.com>
or Jo Anne Westerheide 314-644-0338
jmcwpianov@yahoo.com

July 30-August 13, 2011

Davis, California

Mondavi Center for the Arts
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

April 12-29, 2012

Matsumoto, Nagano, Japan

Harmony Hall
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Karen Hagberg 585-244-0490
kh@hagbergsuzuki.com



The events listed above are for the information of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members and others. Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation does not endorse, sanction, or sponsor events.

To add or change items on this list and on the Suzuki Piano Basics website, contact
Karen Hagberg (kh@hagbergsuzuki.com, 585-244-0490).

General Membership Meeting

The General Membership Meeting for Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation will be held this year during the Louisville Institute, on June 20, 2011 at 5 p.m. Members may submit agenda items to President Karen Hagberg kh@hagbergsuzuki.com before June 15.

Changes

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